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SENATE BILL 2485 By
Haynes

HOUSE BILL 2738
By Williams (Wil)

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 1
and Title 49, Chapter 6, relative to the Tennessee Literacy
Initiative Act of 1999.

WHEREAS, Chapter 130 of the Public Acts of 1999, codified as Tennessee Code
Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 1, Part 9, the "Tennessee Literacy Initiative Act of 1999",
recognized the paramount importance of literacy in the twenty-first century and established a
state goal that every public school student would be able to read at the appropriate level before
being promoted to the third grade; and

WHEREAS, as part of the "Tennessee Literacy Initiative Act of 1999", the office of
education accountability in the office of the comptroller of the treasury was directed to evaluate
the reading proficiency of Tennessee's elementary school children and make recommendations
to ensure that the goal of appropriate reading proficiency before the third grade be
accomplished; and

WHEREAS, the office of education accountability conducted its study taking into
account:

- (1) Interviews with staff of the Tennessee department of education and the state
board of education;
- (2) An extensive literature review of research concerning literacy;

- (3) A review of national test data for Tennessee and other states;
- (4) A review of Tennessee's state test data;
- (5) Interviews with staff of adult literacy projects, such as Nashville READ;
- (6) Interviews with educators at selected school systems;
- (7) A survey of principals in selected schools throughout Tennessee;
- (8) A review of Tennessee's curriculum frameworks for reading, writing, and language arts; and
- (9) A review of other states' approaches to reading; and

WHEREAS, the evaluation found substantial deficiencies in the teaching of reading in Tennessee; deficiencies which were mirrored in an evaluation by the United States Department of Education which found:

Limited specificity regarding reading research and evaluation of student outcomes, insufficient explanation of what will be done to improve literacy, insufficient in-school support, a weak evaluation plan, and insufficient identification of professional development needs; and

WHEREAS, this evaluation by the United States department of education resulted in Tennessee losing a twenty-one million dollars (\$21,000,000) reading excellence federal grant; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 1, Part 9, is amended by adding the following:

Section 49-1-904 (a) The state department of education is directed to:

- (1) Utilize existing resources to the extent possible to inform teachers about current strategies and methods for reading instruction and assessment;

(2) Expand teacher's professional development opportunities to address assessment strategies other than standardized testing that are appropriate for students in grades K-3; and

(3) Make certain that the needs of poor readers in middle and high schools are addressed.

(b) The State Department of Education shall report at least annually to the joint oversight committee on education as to what actions are being taken to implement the provisions of this section.

Section 49-1-905. (a) The State Board of Education and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission should address specifically whether teacher candidates in Tennessee receive adequate training to teach all children to read, and the state board is directed to revise teacher training and certification requirements, as needed, to ensure that teacher candidates are properly trained and qualified.

(b) The State Board of Education and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, in conjunction with the University of Tennessee and the State Board of Regents should also consider development of an information center at a state university for research and information on reading for preschool through twelfth (12th) grade teachers.

(c) The State Board of Education and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission shall report at least annually to the joint oversight committee on education as to what actions are being taken to implement the provisions of this section.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring

it.